

Tampa Bay Regional Rail System

Tampa, Florida

(November 2002)

Description

The Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART), in cooperation with the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the City of Tampa, and the Florida Department of Transportation, is proposing to implement the Tampa Bay Regional Rail System. The proposed project is a light rail transit (LRT) system in three corridors: the 13.4-mile Northeast Corridor, the 1.5-mile Southwest Corridor, and the 5.2-mile West Corridor. The capital cost includes the purchase of 34 light rail vehicles and construction of 26 stations with a total of 3,250 park and ride spaces.

The project is one component of a proposed regionwide Locally Preferred Strategy for implementing a package of multimodal transportation investments. The regionwide Locally Preferred Strategy would eventually extend fixed guideway service beyond Hillsborough County to a portion of Polk County, linking the cities of Tampa, Lakeland, and Plant City and creating a 71-mile Regional Rail System.

The Tampa Bay Regional Rail System will improve access to several major activity centers in the area including the University of South Florida, Downtown Tampa, and the Westshore/Airport area.

| Summary Description | |
|--|---|
| Proposed Project: | Tampa Bay Regional Rail System 20.1 Miles, 26 Stations |
| Total Capital Cost (\$YOE): | \$1.46 Billion |
| Section 5309 New Starts Share (\$YOE): | \$727.7 Million (50%) |
| Annual Operating Cost (2025 \$YOE): | \$53.3 Million |
| Ridership Forecast (2025): | 38,230 Average Weekday Boardings 21,980 Daily New Riders |
| Opening Year Ridership Forecast (2020): | 38,227 Average Weekday Boardings |
| FY 2004 Finance Rating: | Low-Medium |
| FY 2004 Project Justification Rating: | Not Yet Available |
| FY 2004 Overall Project Rating: | Not Recommended |

The project is ***Not Recommended*** due to the lack of financial commitments to the project and the heavy reliance of the financial plan on passage of a local sales tax referendum that is not expected to occur until at least 2004. The overall project rating applies to this *Annual Report on New Starts* and reflects conditions as of November 2002. Project evaluation is an ongoing process. As New Starts projects proceed through project development, the estimates of cost, benefits, and impacts are refined. **The FTA ratings and recommendations will be updated annually to reflect new information, changing conditions, and refined financing plans.**

Status

A Major Investment Study (MIS) to address alternatives for enhancing mobility throughout Tampa, Hillsborough County, Lakeland, and Polk County was completed in April 1998, with the selection by local stakeholders of a multimodal Locally Preferred Strategy, including a 71-mile Regional Rail System. The MIS also identified 28.5 miles of rail investment in the Northeast, Southwest, and West Corridors to be included in a regional “Early Action Plan” minimum operable segment. The Year 2020 Long-Range Transportation Plan, which incorporates both the Early Action Plan and Locally Preferred Strategy, was formally adopted by the Hillsborough County MPO Board in November 1998. FTA approved initiation of Preliminary Engineering for the three corridors in the Early Action Plan in January 1999.

In July 2001, HART released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Based on comments received on the DEIS, the HART Board formally adopted a revised Locally Preferred Alternative for fixed guideway in the three corridors in October 2001. The new Locally Preferred Alternative is the 20.1-mile, 26 station LRT system, which is a change in vehicle technology from the previous Locally Preferred Alternative that utilized Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs). HART anticipates completion of the Final EIS and a Record of Decision in late 2002/early 2003. A public referendum to establish a local funding mechanism to cover the local share of capital and operating costs for the project is anticipated for November 2004.

TEA-21 Section 3030(a)(89) authorized the Tampa Regional Rail System for Final Design and construction. Through FY 2002, Congress has appropriated \$5.94 million in Section 5309 New Starts funds for this project.

Evaluation

The following criteria have been estimated in conformance with FTA's *Reporting Instructions for the Section 5309 New Starts Criteria*, updated in June 2002. N/A indicates that data are not available for a specific measure. The project will be reevaluated when it is ready to advance to Final Design, and for next year's *Annual Report on New Starts*.

| Project Justification Quantitative Criteria | | |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Mobility Improvements Rating: Not Rated | | |
| | <u>New Start vs. Baseline</u> | |
| Average Employment Per Station | 7,355 | |
| Average Low Income Households Per Station | 280 | |
| Transportation System User Benefit Per Project Passenger Mile (Minutes) | Not Rated | |
| Environmental Benefits Rating: Medium | | |
| <u>Criteria Pollutant Reduced</u> (tons) | <u>New Start vs. Baseline</u> | |
| Carbon Monoxide (CO) | 238 | |
| Nitrogen Oxide (NO _x) | 42 | |
| Hydrocarbons | 30 | |
| Particulate Matter (PM ₁₀) | 0 | |
| Carbon Dioxide (CO ₂) | 5,200 | |
| <u>Annual Energy Savings</u> (million) | | |
| BTU | 48,459 | |
| Cost Effectiveness Rating: Not Rated | | |
| | <u>New Start vs. Baseline</u> | |
| Cost Per Transportation System User Benefit (current year dollars/hour) | Not Rated | |
| Operating Efficiencies Rating: Medium | | |
| | <u>Baseline</u> | <u>New Start</u> |
| System Operating Cost per Passenger Mile (current year dollars) | \$0.63 | \$0.58 |

[] indicate an increase in emissions.

Project Justification

Rating: Not Yet Available

The project justification rating is *Not Yet Available* because the transportation system user benefit measure used for cost effectiveness and mobility improvements was not submitted. Consequently, project justification could not be rated. The project sponsor is currently working to correct errors in the travel demand forecasting model. The model will be recalibrated and new information submitted. FTA will rate the project and make that information available to Congress and other interested parties when the analysis is complete.

Based on the 1990 Census data, there are an estimated 7,278 low-income households within ½-mile radius of the proposed stations, or roughly 29 percent of the total households within ½-mile of the proposed stations. There are an estimated 191,226 jobs located within ½-mile of the proposed stations. The Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater Metropolitan Area is designated as a

“marginal maintenance area” for ozone. The Tampa Bay Regional Rail project has an incremental cost per incremental trip value of \$6.76.

Existing Land Use, Transit-Supportive Land Use Policies and Future Patterns

Rating: Medium

Land use in the project corridor currently is not highly transit-supportive, but future growth, coupled with regional growth management policies and effective planning within station areas, has the potential to create land use patterns that are significantly more transit-oriented. Reaching this potential will depend upon the successful implementation of regional and corridor policies through zoning, financial incentives, and measures to restrict parking supplies.

Existing Conditions: Population totals and densities are low in the project corridor, while employment totals and densities are somewhat higher, but still relatively low compared to most areas with LRT systems. Parking is plentiful throughout the corridor and only a few station areas can be considered moderately transit-supportive in terms of densities or the character of development. A number of significant activity generators, including the University of South Florida, University of Tampa, Downtown Tampa, Ybor City, and the Westshore district are located in the project corridor.

Future Plans, Policies and Performance: The high rates of regional population and economic growth experienced over the last several decades are expected to continue in the future. The Urban Growth Boundary and other policies included in the Comprehensive Plans for the City of Tampa and Hillsborough County are projected to channel a significant share of regional growth into Downtown Tampa and other areas that would be served by the project. Transit-supportive policies have yet to be implemented through zoning or such means as the creation of overlay districts in station areas, although the City offers incentives for mixed use, higher-density development. Community-based station area planning has been initiated.

The project sponsor has worked with the City and State on the development of conceptual transit-supportive land use plans for a number of station areas. This interagency working group also is considering potential implementation tools, including regulations, zoning waivers, fee incentives, tax increment financing, property tax abatement, and tax credits.

Local Financial Commitment

Rating: Low-Medium

The *Low-Medium* local financial commitment rating was determined by the *Low-Medium* rating for the capital financing plan and the *Low-Medium* rating for the operating finance plan.

Proposed Non-Section 5309 New Starts Share of Total Project Costs: 50%

Rating: Medium

HARTline will use Section 5309 New Starts funds, State funds, and local funds from the proposed dedicated sales tax to construct the project.

| Locally Proposed Financial Plan | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| <u>Proposed Source of Funds</u> | <u>Total Funding (\$million)</u> | <u>Percent of Total</u> |
| Federal: Section 5309 New Starts | \$727.7 | 50.0% |
| State: FDOT TMA Funds FDOT "Other Arterial" funds FDOT Intermodal Funds Florida Public Transportation Office Discretionary funds | \$64.1 \$134.4 \$25.4 \$11.6 | 4.4% 9.2% 1.7% 0.8% |
| Local: Local Sales Tax | \$492.2 | 33.8% |
| Total: | \$1,455.5 | 100.0 % |

NOTE: Funding proposal reflects assumptions made by project sponsors, and are not DOT or FTA assumptions. Total may not add due to rounding.

Stability and Reliability of Capital Financing Plan

Rating: Low-Medium

The *Low-Medium* rating reflects the large number of new funding sources proposed for the project and the lack of committed funding. Although HARTline provided a detailed, well-structured financial plan, it is completely reliant on passage of a dedicated sales tax referendum that is not proposed to be placed on the ballot until November 2004.

Agency Capital Financial Condition: HARTline's financial condition is average. The average age of the bus fleet is 9.5 years. According to the financial plan submitted by HARTline, maintenance and administration buildings are old and in need of comprehensive rehabilitation.

Capital Cost Estimates and Contingencies: The capital cost estimate includes a 25 percent project contingency for each cost component, which is considered reasonable for a project in Preliminary Engineering.

Existing and Committed Funding: None of the non-Section 5309 New Starts funding is existing or committed to the project at this time.

New and Proposed Sources: All State and local funding sources proposed by HARTline are new sources. State sources include Florida DOT Transportation Management Association Funds, arterial funds and intermodal funds, as well as Florida Public Transportation funds.

Local funding is assumed to come from a dedicated sales tax, which is not proposed to be placed on the ballot until November 2004.

Stability and Reliability of Operating Finance Plan

Rating: Low-Medium

The *Low-Medium* rating reflects the significant uncertainty regarding the proposed dedicated local sales tax and the reliance on this source for funding of operations.

Agency Operating Financial Condition: HARTline's current operating budget totals \$31.5 million. HARTline currently receives operating funding from an ad valorem property tax collected from all Hillsborough County property owners at a rate of 0.5 mill (a mill is equal to \$1.00 of tax for each \$1,000 of assessment). In recent years, tax revenues have been insufficient to cover HARTline's operating expenses. Consequently, service reductions have been necessary in order to satisfy the balanced budget requirements of the Florida Constitution.

Operating Cost Estimates and Contingencies: Annual operating and maintenance expenses for the proposed LRT are projected to be \$53.3 million in forecast year 2025 (escalated dollars). This estimate is based on a moderately conservative methodology that examined recent actual experiences of nine peer systems.

Existing and Committed Funding: Other than farebox revenues, the proposed dedicated local sales tax will provide the only source of revenue for operations and maintenance of the proposed LRT. Farebox revenues are assumed to provide 43 percent of annual operating and maintenance funds, while the local sales tax is assumed to provide the remaining 57 percent.

New and Proposed Funding Sources: Local operating and maintenance funding is assumed to come from a new dedicated local sales tax, which is not proposed to be placed on the ballot until November 2004.

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